(1) Social Background

Generally, caste system was popular in Indian society before the period of Mauryas and discrimination between four castes became serious and fierce.

While analyzing the Indian social factor, it needs to be kept in mind that the history of ancient India has been the history of the upper castes. Almost none of Indian literary sources represent the viewpoint of the various submerged sections of the society. By the beginning of the Buddhism, caste system with its gross inequalities was well entrenched in India and it had become both functional and hereditary. Four castes are known as Brahmins, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas and Sêdras. Among these castes, Brahmins were considered as the highest people, who enjoyed every social privilege and their ascendency as an inalienable birthright. And they came to be viewed as gods in human form and kings were obligated to place themselves at their service.

In the Madhura Sutta, the Brahmins consider themselves as the most distinguished and three other castes as inferior. The Brahmins alone are accounted pure and those who are not Brahmins impure. The Brahmins are sons of Brahman, born from his mouth and the heirs of Brahman.¹

Such a haughty attitude of Brahmins was certainly protested by Buddhism and Jainism as all men have the power to become perfect. As a result, all members of the society were admitted into Buddhist sangha and then they were treated equally in the Buddhist Order.²

Again, the claim to superiority by the Brahmins against the rest of the castes was challenged by the Ksatriyas, who took lead in the struggle against the Brahmins’ attitude as their powers as the ruler of the state increased. Ksatriyas were responsible to rule and maintain social order as well as to defend the country. This caste consisted of kings, mandarins, officers and

¹ NBT, p. 171.
² Ibid., pp. 171-4.
soldiers. In the time of Buddha, Kṣatriyas were placed higher than Brahmins. Vaisyas, the third class, traded and held an important part of social properties. This caste included landlords, businessmen, and small traders, etc. ŚĒdras included workers, hunters, menials and serfs, etc. This was the lowest class in the society and they were the property of three higher castes. It means that they were subservient to other castes. Generally, they lived and died like animals.

According to D.N. Jha⁴, the first three castes, Brahmin, Kṣatriya and Vaisya, were twice-born and they were more privileged than ŚĒdras and untouchables who were outcaste. Generally speaking, ancient Indian rulers used the ideology of Brahmanism to consolidate their authority to run the social order. Asoka, the great king of Mauryas, embraced Brahmanism before converting to Buddhism. Though he followed Buddhism, castes system still existed in his empire. The caste division was, however, not severe in his kingdom. D.N. Jha⁵ holds that during the reign of Mauryas, four castes became endogamous and their rigidity, which generated tension, would no be found.

In the time of Asoka, a section of ŚĒdras for the first time in India history were aided by the state in setting down as farmers in the agricultural settlements and were granted lands and the fiscal exemption as well as the supply of cattle, seeds, and money in the hope of future payment.⁶ On the other hand, in industrial activities, artisans and craftsmen played their role in the production of commodities.⁷ On the basis of Milindapanh, D.N. Jha⁸ holds that in the time of Mauryas there were seventy five occupations, out of which nearly sixty occupations were connected with various kinds of crafts. And the rest were connected with mining of products such as gold, silver, lead, tin, copper, iron and precious stones or jewels. The artisans and craftsmen were largely drawn, in this period, from ŚĒdras, who gained in wealth and status on account of the progress of crafts and commerces.

In the time of Kusūnas, SĒtvĒhanas, the caste division was seemingly blurred and Brahmins could not achieve considerable ascendency. And many new sub-castes emerged on the

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³ DAI, p. 64.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid., p. 59.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Ibid., p. 85.
basis of occupations. N. Dutt\(^9\) holds that in the Indian society appeared several occupational
groups such as shepherds (golikas), ploughmen (halikas), weavers (kolikas), goldsmiths
(swonnakaras), garland-makers (malakaras), and others. These occupational groups led to
enhanced division of labour and increased specialisation and consequently to the achievement of
greater technical skill in certain spheres of productions.

D.N. Jha\(^10\) asserts that, during the time of Kusānas \(^2\) Sātavāhanas, the economic
distinctions between the Vaisyas and Sādras were difficult to discriminate. Another special
feature of the period was that women enjoyed all social interests. Intelligent and educated
women like Naganika and Gotami Balasri played an important role in running of the
administration and they held property in their own rights. Women offered worship along with
men, taking part in solemnity of ceremonies.\(^11\) In short, during the time of Mauryas \(^2\) Kusānas \(^2\) Sātavāhanas, caste division was no longer too harsh and the inter-caste economic inequality was
not abundant. Whereas, in the time of Guptas, caste division became fierce. Perhaps the
derogatory like terms Chandala and untouchables were used during the Guptas period.

As pointed out above, Brahmins were placed under Ksatriyas in the time of Buddha but
they regained a superior position in the time of Guptas, as can be judged from several
concessions and priorities recommended for them. Although section of Sādras was also granted
lands in the newly colonized areas, they were also engaged as sharecroppers on crown lands; yet
forced labour was imposed on them on a much larger scale than in the earlier periods. Truly, the
land grants in the periods only paved the way for feudal development in India. Several
inscriptions refer to the emergence of serfdom, which means that the peasants remain attached to
their lands even when ownership is transferred. Perhaps serfdom began in south India as a
Pallava inscription informs that sharecroppers remained attached to the plot that was given to
Brahmins.\(^12\)

On the other hand, in the countryside of northern India, there emerged a class of village
elders and headmen, who had to be informed of land transfers. Later, they also ossified into a

\(^9\) NMB, p. 31.
\(^10\) DAI, p. 85.
\(^11\) NMB, p. 31.
\(^12\) DAI, pp. 100-1.
caste but the social implications of land grants and subinfeudation became pronounced in the post Gupta period when the feudalism was well established.\textsuperscript{13}

In the industrial and commercial activities, artisans, craftsmen and businessmen were exploited excessively. Kautilya fixed the wages of artisans who were probably mostly \textit{S\'{E}dras}. They seem to have been the worst paid members of society. Again, the members of \textit{Chandala} and untouchable were required to live beyond the pale of \textit{Aryan} society. It means that they must live outside the main settlement; they must live near the garbage grounds or near the cremation grounds.\textsuperscript{14} And \textit{S\'{E}dras} continued to be employed as hired labourers or slaves during the period.

According to D.N. Jha\textsuperscript{15}, there were fifteen kinds of slaves in the time of Guptas. They were mostly domestic servants employed in such impure works like sweeping the gateway, the privy, the road, removing the left-over food, ordure and rubbing the master’s limbs, etc. Those, who engaged in agricultural activities, are described as doing pure works and are not included in the category of slaves.

On the other hand, the status of women was scorned and they were not entitled even to formal education. Patanjali\textsuperscript{16} tells that the maid servant and \textit{S\'{E}dra} women were meant for satisfying the pleasures of the people of the upper classes. At that time, women were denied any rights to keep property except garments and the some forms of Jewellery. They themselves were considered as property that could be given or loaned to any person of upper class.\textsuperscript{17} The practice of self immolation at the funeral pyre of her master or that of her husband was approved by \textit{Manu} law; and celibacy was to be strictly observed by widows.\textsuperscript{18}

Moreover, many harsh punishments were influenced on the people of lower classes during the period. According to D.N. Jha\textsuperscript{19}, if a man of low caste hurt a member of high classes, his limbs were to be cut off. If a \textit{S\'{E}dra} insulted a twice-born with gross invective, he would have his tongue cut out.

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\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 103-4.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 85.
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By these reasons, most Sêdras seethed in discontent about the law of Manu but they could not rise against it. They were destined to accept an unhappy life in a long night of medieval civilization of India.

(2) Political Background

Politics is very important factor for the religious development. A good regime of politics promotes growth of religion whereas a harsh regime will hold back its development and propagation. Generally, Buddhism, during the period, was not influenced by the change of politics.\textsuperscript{20} MahÊyÊna Buddhism was born and grown in the favourable political conditions. All rulers of dynasties supported both Brahmanism and Buddhism. Under their patronages, MahÊyÊna Buddhism experienced a quantitative and qualitative progress during the periods of KusÊnas, SÊtavÊhanas and Guptas. Many missionaries of MahÊyÊna and SÊrvastivÊda Buddhism were sent to Central Asia and South eastern Asia during these periods.

Mauryas and Division of Buddhist sects

According to N. Dutt\textsuperscript{21}, after the invasion and retreat of Alexander, the whole of India was united under the king Candragupta, founder of the Maurya dynasty. This dynasty lasted from 317 B.C. to 180 B.C. with five great reigns. Candragupta ruled from 317 B.C. to 293 B.C., BindusÊra from 293 B.C. to 268 B.C., Asoka from 268 B.C. to 232 B.C. and Brhadratha from 232 B.C. to 180 B.C.

D.N. Jha\textsuperscript{22} adds that Candragupta was for sometimes in the camp of Alexander, after retreat of the Macedonian conqueror, he ascended the throne of Magadha. He united Punjab and the north western provinces with Bihar, and conquered many districts that had been subdued by the Greeks. For first time in the history of India, he brought the whole of northern India from the Indus to Bihar under his vigorous rule. Candragupta died about 293 B.C. and was succeeded by his son BindusÊra, who ruled for about 30 years. BindusÊra’s son, Asoka, ascended the throne about 268 B.C. Among the rulers of Maurya dynasty, Asoka is considered as the strongest king of Mauryas.

\textsuperscript{20} JBC, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{21} NMB, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{22} DAI, pp. 99-100.
Asoka, inheriting the magnificent empire founded by Candragupta, his grandfather, opened his empire to Bengal and Orissa and the whole northern India. Bactria, Kabul and Kandahar and the Dekhan as far as the Krishna river belonged to his kingdom. He embraced Brahmanism before converting to Buddhism. It is said that, after Kalinga war, he thought that he had killed innumerable people, so he came to Buddhism as his repentance. Under the reign of Asoka, Buddhism was considered as the state religion of India. After becoming a Buddhist, he built many monasteries, temples for Buddhist monks and erected images of Buddha at many places in his kingdom. According to Buddhist tradition, he constructed 84,000 stхиpas but the best specimens of contemporary art are the monolithic highly polished columns, standing free in space often crowned with animal figures. He issued fourteen edicts in which the MahаИyаЊnic teachings such as ahimsаЊ, maitrИ, karunаЊ, toleration, wisdom, etc were mentioned.

Recently some of these edicts which have been discovered at Indus, Jumna, Gujarat and Orissa show his actions. Besides the rock edicts, there were edicts, that were inscribed on pillars and that were executed towards the end of his reign. Among these stone pillars, two pillars have been discovered in Delhi, one in Allahabad, two in north Bihar, and one in central India.

D.N. Jha has highly rated Asoka’s Dharma because it emphasizes on abstinence from killing, considerate relationship between parents and children, elder and young people, friends, masters and servants and harmonization of various religious sects. According to him, Asoka’s dharma excessively concerns with the general welfare of the subjects and it was also an ethical code that aimed at building up an attitude of social responsibility among the people.

Specially, under Asoka’s patronage, the third Buddhist council was held. K.D. Bajpai holds that during the reign of Asoka, Pataliputra, the capital of Magadha had become the great cultural centre, where scholars of different Buddhist sects lived and preached their respective doctrines. According to him, SЁrvastivЁda school held an honoured position in Magadha; specially, KЁtyЁyaniputra, who was one of components of the SЁrvastivЁda, wrote ЈаЁna

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23 Ibid., p. 70.  
24 RAI, p. 102.  
25 Ibid., p. 103.  
26 DAI, p. 67.  
27 AIB, pp. 236-61.  
28 Ibid.  
29 SST, p. 28.
prasthêna sêtra in which he expounded the theory: All external objects exist in past, present and future. This theory was refuted by Moggaliputra Tissa, author of the Kathêvatthu that was compiled in the time of Asoka. By these reasons, the third Buddhist council was held under the chairmanship of Moggaliputra Tissa.

K.D. Bajpai’s assessment is not correct. Because before the third Buddhist council, Buddhism had only two schools, Theravêda and Mahêsanghika. And Sêrvastivêda was founded after the third Buddhist council. It is said that, in the third Buddhist council, many monks of Theravêda, who did not agree with Theravêdin idea, left Magadha and went to Kasmir to found a new sect called Sêrvastivêda. Through their activities Kasmir became the centre of Buddhist philosophical studies in the north India.\(^{30}\) Mahêyêna Buddhism is said to be present during the time of Asoka. Andrew skilton\(^{31}\) states that the third Buddhist council was not a great council because it only consisted of the Theravêdin monks, who belonged to one of the conflicting sects even the Mahêyêna monks were not invited. Thus, after the third Buddhist council, Buddhism had only four sects, Theravêda, Mahêsanghika, Mahêyêna, and Sêrvastivêda. And the other Buddhist sects seem to appear after the fourth Buddhist council held in Kasmir during the reign of Kaniska (1\(^{st}\) B.C.).

During the reign of Asoka, Buddhism not only developed in India, it also was propagated in other Asian countries. N. Dutt\(^{32}\) asserts that after the third Buddhist council, Asoka’s son and daughter were sent to Ceylon to introduce Buddhism in that island and the sacred books carried there by word of mouth that were reduced to writing in 88 B.C. in the form in which we have three pitakas of Ceylon to this day.

D.N. Jha’s viewpoint is completely not concerned with reality because Pêli Tipitakas were composed after the fourth Buddhist council of Theravêda in Ceylon, under the guidance of Buddhaghosa about fifth century A.D.

Towards the end of his reign, Asoka’s grip over the imperial organization became weak. His policy of dharma failed to achieve the desirous goal and social tensions continued. His official high-handedness often led to popular resentment. Moreover, Taxila, where was

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 4.
\(^{31}\) ACB, p. 47.
\(^{32}\) DAI, p. 92.
possessed by his father early was goaded to rebellion again by ministerial oppression. On the other hand, the existence of several religious sects might have led to tensions and conflicts. Again, Asoka’s pro-Buddhist policy is said to have antagonised the Bramins. Moreover, he used so much money of the state for his charitable public works that led to exhaustion of the state exchequer and inflation was gradually increased. Again, after the conquest of Kalinga, Asoka fought no wars and army was used only for parades and public spectacles. The huge army became superfluous and much too costly to maintain. By these reasons, the decline of Maurya dynasty could be appreciated.

After the death of Asoka in 232 B.C., the empire was divided into western and eastern halves. The western part was rules by Kunala and then for a while by Samprati. The empire was threatened from the north-west by the Bactrian Greeks, to whom it was lost by 180 B.C. From the south, the threat was posed by the Andhra or SÈtavÈhana, who later came to power in the Deccan. The eastern part of the empire with its capital pataliputra continued to be governed for nearly half a century by Asoka’s successors. All scholars agree that Brihadratha was the last rulers of the Maurya empire. He is said to be slain in 180 B.C. by his Brahmana general Pushyamitra Shunga, who founded an independent dynasty. According to N. Dutt, Pushyamitra Shunga ruled over a large empire that included Magadha, AyodhyÈ, VidisÈ, Jalandhara, and SÈkala in the Punjab. Pushyamitra had to face a Bactrian invasion and came conflict with the Bactian princes. He ultimately became victorious and drove them out of Magadha, perhaps even beyond the Sindhu.

He reigned for 36 years from 187 B.C. to 151 B.C. He was succeeded by his son Agnimitra who was followed by other descendants and all of them remained in power from 151 B.C. to 75 B.C. Sunga opposed to Buddhism as revived Brahmanism, and patronized the BhÈyavata cult. And prince Heliodoros erected a Garuda pillar and described himself as a BhÈyavata in the inscription of BhilsÈ (Besnagar). Though some Sungas were anti-Buddhism,
the people of VidisÈ expressed their faith in MahÈyÈna Buddhism as is proved by fine gateway railing around the Saoci stÈpa. It was erected by emperor Asoka.

N. Dutt38 states that the Bactrian Greeks, who invaded some parts of northern India shortly after the downfall of Magadhan empire. They not only adopted the Indian culture but also made a special contribution to its development in course of two centuries of their rule. In the second century B.C., the Greek rulers, viz. Euthydemus and Eucratides crossed the Hindukush and took possession of Kabul and north western India. They were followed by Demetrius and Theodorus, who were supporters of MahÈyÈnism as they enshrined the Buddha’s relics and erected sanctuaries. According to N. Dutt, two Kharosthi inscriptions incised at the instance of the Greek chiefs have been discovered at Swat and Taxila. It shows that MahÈyÈna Buddhism had a firm footing in north western India and was welcomed by the foreign rulers.

38 Ibid., p. 3.
Sakas and Mahêyêna Buddhism

According to N. Dutt, in the beginning of the first century B.C., two or three groups of Sakas migrated to India from central Asia. The first group was Sakas from the north (perhaps coming from Khotan) took the pamir route through the Karakorum mountain to Swat and Gandhara. The second group of Sakas crossed Hindukush, under pressure of the Yuezhi to mountain valleys of north eastern Afghanistan and the third group of Sakas coming from south west (Sakastan) took control of modern Sindh in north Pakistan. N. Dutt\textsuperscript{39} states that Sakas or the Scythians, who were settled in the Oxus region previously occupied by the Greeks, who were ousted from the region in the second century B.C. by the nomadic horders known as Yuezhis, a name given by the ancient Chinese.\textsuperscript{40} Yuezhis, previously settled near the Chinese frontier, were ousted by other hordes of people. They migrated to the west and compelled Sakas to leave the Oxus valley and to go in search of a new land for their settlement.\textsuperscript{41}

According to Hermann Kulke\textsuperscript{42}, the Sakas, who went to the south, as the northern punjab was in the hands of Greeks, entered into India through an other route and took possession of the lower Indus valley and then spread to the western India. But N. Dutt\textsuperscript{43} maintains that Sakas of Dyr Daria fell upon Bactria and then entered into India up to Kaksalilê and Mathura in the north and Malwa and Kathiawad in the west. They established themselves in Sindh and Punjab also. Their representatives were known as viceroys (satraps) of Saurastra and Malwa. The Sakas not only participated in Indian civilization and ideas but also introduced Indian civilization to Central Asia and Far Eastern countries.\textsuperscript{44} Like Greeks, the Sakas also patronized Buddhism and especially Mahêyêna doctrines were adopted. They gave donations to the Buddhist sangha, erected stûpas, built many monasteries, temples and installed images of Buddha in their domain.

The first Saka king in India was Maues. There are various views regarding the dates of Maues. N. Dutt\textsuperscript{45} affirms that Maues ruled from 60 to 50 B.C. and established a principality in

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{40} HDHI\textsuperscript{3}, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{41} NMB, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{42} HDHI\textsuperscript{3}, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{43} NMB, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 4.
the western *Punjab*. Whereas, Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund\(^46\) maintain that Maues ruled from 94 B.C. to 22 A.D.

After Maues, his successor Azes established a large Indian empire including the north west and the parts of central India from *Gandhara* down to *Mathura* and *Ujjain* and the ways to the coast of *Saurashtra*. According to N. Dutt\(^47\) the Sakas’ empire was continuously ruled by Gondapharnes (30 B.C.\(^2\) 15 B.C.) and Pakores (15 B.C.\(^2\) 10 B.C.). But Hermann Kulke\(^48\) asserts that Gondapharnes was not Saka, he was seemingly a provincial governor of *Arachosia* in southern Afghanistan. Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rotermund hold that the Sakas’ career was continued by Azes II, who was the last great king of north-west. In the last decades B.C., the Saka empire showed definite signs of decay as the provincial governors became more powerful. About 20 A.D., the Sakas were replaced by the short-lived Indo-parthian dynasty founded by king Gondapharnes, who reigned from 20 A.D. to 46 A.D.

Though Gondapharnes managed to conquer the central part of the Saka domain, the eastern part around *Mauthura* seemingly has remained outside his kingdom because the local Saka Kshatrapas in this region had attained their independence. And *Saurashtra* where independent Saka Kshatrapas still held sway until the time of Guptas.\(^49\) N. Dutt\(^50\) maintains that the Sakas sought the help of the *Kusênas* and thereby paved the way for the advent of the *Kusêna* rule in India.

**Kusênas and Mahêyêna Buddhism**

In the early first century A.D., when Indo-parthians, Sakas and remnants of the Indo-Greeks were still fighting with each other in India, new invaders were already on their way to India. According to Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund\(^51\), the Yuezhi under the leadership of the *Kusêna* came down from Central Asia and swept away all earlier dynasties of north-west

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\(^{46}\) HDHI\(_3\), p. 72.
\(^{47}\) NMB, p. 5.
\(^{48}\) HDHI\(_3\), p. 74.
\(^{49}\) NMB, p. 5.
\(^{50}\) Ibid.
\(^{51}\) HDHI\(_3\), p. 74.
in the great campaign of conquest. They established an empire, that extended from central Asia to the eastern Gangetic basin.

N. Dutt\textsuperscript{52} states that the Kus\text{"en}a, at that time, dominated over Afghanistan, after ousting the Parthian successors of the Greeks, they drove out the Parthians from the Gandhara region. R.C. Dutt\textsuperscript{53} states that the Yuezhi themselves entered into India, Havishka chief of Kus\text{"en}a conquered Kasmir in the first century A.D. and his successor, the great Kaniska extended his empire from Kabul to as far as Gujarat and Angra. In fact, Havishka (140-183 A.D.) was the sixth king of Kus\text{"ena}. He was succeeded by Vasudeva (191-225 A.D.). Kaniska was not successor of Havishka. But, according to Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, Kujala Kadphises was the first king of Kus\text{"ena} dynasty. In India, Kujala Kadphises, prince of Kus\text{"ena}, vanquished the four other princes about the time of the birth of Christ and established the first Kus\text{"ena} kingdom. He attacked the Parthians and conquered Kabul and Kasmir. When he died at the age of 80 years, his son, Vima Kadphises I, proceeded to conquer India.

After the death of Vima Kadphises I, his son Vima Kadphises II continued his father’s aggressive policy and conquered north India, all the way down to Mathura even up to Varanasi. Vima Kadphises II was succeeded by Kaniska, the greatest of all Kus\text{"ena} rulers. N. Dutt\textsuperscript{54} agrees with Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, that Kujala Kadphises was the first king of Kus\text{"enas} but N. Dutt identifies Kujala Kadphises with Vima Kadphises I. and according to him, Kujala Kadphises was succeeded by Kaniska whereas Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund hold that Kujala Kadphises was succeeded by Vima Kadphises I and Kaniska was successor of Vima Kadphises II.\textsuperscript{55} It means that Kaniska was the fourth king of Kus\text{"ena} dynasty.

D.N. Jha\textsuperscript{56} states that Vima Kadphises I issued gold coins that formed momentous innovation, for after him, Kus\text{"enas} minted coins basically in gold and copper. According to Hermann Kulke\textsuperscript{57}, Vima Kadphises I seems to have been close to Buddhism, probably

\textsuperscript{52} NMB, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{53} RAI, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{54} NMB, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{55} HDHI\textsuperscript{3}, pp. 74-6.
\textsuperscript{56} DAI, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{57} HDHI\textsuperscript{3}, p. 75.
Servastividin school; but his son Vima Kadphises II seems to have been a devotee of Brahmanical god Siva as some of his coins clearly show image of Siva.

Again, an inscription was found at Taxila, dated 76 A.D., asserts that Vima Kadphises II was a follower of Brahmanism.\(^{58}\)

Kaniska, the greatest ruler of Kusenas, ruled from 78 A.D. to 120 A.D. His capital was Purushapura or Peshwar; he also constructed a city called Kaniskapuram.

After conquering Kasmir, Kaniska crossed the pamir and defeated the Chinese; he also conquered Khotan, Yarkhand, and Kashgar. He also defeated Saka rulers of Malwa and Gujarat; he had defeated the ruler of Magadha and took Asvaghosa, the great Mahēyēna Buddhist philosopher, to his empire. Kaniska used to worship many gods of Brahmanism prior to embracing Buddhism. Asvaghosa, the Buddhist philosopher, probably influenced Kaniska to become a Buddhist.

Kaniska extended his empire from the Oxus in the west to Varanasi in the east and from Kasmir in the north via Malwa right down to the coast of Gujarat in the south.\(^{59}\) According to Hermann Kulke\(^{60}\), there is no document to prove his hold over Central Asia. However, there is a reference to the defeat of Kusēna army by the Chinese general, Pan Chao, at Khotan in the year 90 A.D. On the contrary, Romila Thapar\(^{61}\) evidences that the Kusēna dynasty was in the ascendant in Central Asia under Kaniska whose relationship to the earlier kings of countries in Central Asia has been confirmed by the recent discovery of an inscription in Afghanistan. The principal aim of both Vima Kadphises II and Kaniska was seemly to control the trade routes connecting India with Roma because this trade must have been very profitable to Kusēnas.

Like Asoka, Kaniska also worked for the spread of Buddhism in the whole of India as well as abroad. During the time of Kaniska, Mahēyēna Buddhism was considered as a state religion in his empire.\(^{62}\) He built many stēpas, monasteries, and erected images of the Buddha in

\(^{58}\) Ibid.
\(^{59}\) Ibid.
\(^{60}\) HDHI, p. 75.
\(^{61}\) RPHEI, p. 221.
\(^{62}\) NMB, p. 20.
his kingdom. The great stÉpa at peshawar is rated as his greatest contribution to Buddhist monumental architecture.\textsuperscript{63}

Kaniska was not only strong because his military and political success but also due to his ethics. The Buddhists have considered him as a great Buddhist ruler in India. During the time of Kaniska, the four main sects of Buddhism \textsuperscript{2} TheravÉda, MahÈsanghika, MahÈyÈna and SÈravastivÉda were further divided into twenty or more sects.\textsuperscript{64} According to William Montgomery M.C. Govern\textsuperscript{65}, during the time of Kaniska Buddhism had twenty three different sects. TheravÉda was divided into ten sects, that is, TheravÉda, MahÈsEsaka, VÈtsÈputrÈyas, Dharmottara, BhÈdrayÈnika, SamitÈyas, SannagarÈkas, Dharmagupta, KÈsyapÈya, SautÈntika and VaibhÈsika.\textsuperscript{66} And MahÈsanghika was also divided into ten sects, viz. MÈlamahÈsanghika, EkavyavahÈrika, LokottaravÈdins, KaurukullakÈs, BahusrutÈyas, PrajÈÊtivÈdins, Caitya sailas, Avara sailas and Uttara sailas.\textsuperscript{67}

According to two Kharosthi inscriptions, MahÈyÈna Buddhism was present during the time of Mauryas. MahÈyÈna Buddhism, at first, had no sectarian division.\textsuperscript{68} In the second century A.D., Rahurabhadra, NÈgÈrjuna’s master, founded Madhyamika school, and then the school was split into two sections in the fifth century A.D., one led by Bhavaviveka and another by Buddhapaìita.\textsuperscript{69} And in the third or fourth century A.D., MaitreyanÈtha, Asanga’s master, founded YogÈcÈra school (VijÈÈnavÈda).\textsuperscript{70} The school was developed by Asanga (4\textsuperscript{th} A.D.), Vasubandhu (4\textsuperscript{th} A.D.), Sthiramti (4\textsuperscript{th} A.D.), DharmapÈla (6\textsuperscript{th} A.D.), Santaraksita (8\textsuperscript{th} A.D.), KarmÈlasÈla (8\textsuperscript{th} A.D.), etc.\textsuperscript{71}

According to N. Dutt\textsuperscript{72}, the reason leading to these divisions is on account of multiple interpretations of the Buddha’s teachings. Specially, they did not accept the TheravÈda doctrine

\textsuperscript{63} DAI, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p. 87.
\textsuperscript{65} WIM, p. 192.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p. 196.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} AIB, p. 355.
\textsuperscript{69} KBC, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{70} SIP\textsuperscript{2}, p. 376.
\textsuperscript{71} JBC, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{72} NMB, p. 20.
that *Arhat* is the perfect one.\(^7\) MahÈdeva\(^7\), the member of *MahÈsanghika*, pointed out five imperfections of *Arhat: Arhat* is subject to temptation, ignorance, doubt, the *Arhatship* is attained through others’ help, and *Arhat* attained the relative truth only.

To resolve conflicting views, and to re-assert the *Vinaya* and *Abhidharma*, the fourth *Buddhist* council was convened at *Kundalvana* in Kasmir.\(^7\) According to N. Dutt\(^7\), king Kaniska invited 500 *Arhats*, 500 *Bodhisattvas* and 500 *Panditas* to take part in the council in which MahÈbhadhanta Vasumitra was Chairman and Asvaghosa was vice Chairman.

After reciting the texts, the council agreed that the texts acknowledged by all *Buddhist* sects are the teachings of the Buddha.\(^7\) And Kaniska ordered to inscribe all the treatises on copper plates and had them enclosed in stone boxes to be deposited into a *stÈpa* for safety.\(^7\) After the fourth *Buddhist* council, *Buddhism* consisted of *HÈnayÈna* (*SÈravastivÈda* and its branches) and *MahÈyÈna* (*Madhyamika* school). After the fourth *Buddhist* council, *TheravÈda* disappeared from India where it flourished.\(^7\)

During the reign of Kaniska, *MahÈyÈna* not only developed in India, it also spread to China, Japan, central Asia and Tibet, etc. Andrew Skilton\(^8\) states that by the silk and sea routes, *Buddhism* went to China in the first century A.D. and to Tibet about the seventh century A.D. Kenneth. K.S. Ch’en\(^8\) says that by the first century A.D. *MahÈyÈna Buddhism* had already established itself in central Asia and was poised for the leap a cross the desert sands to the populous and civilized centres in China. And according to him, in the time of emperor Han Ming Ti (58-75 A.D.), Kasyapa Matanga and Chu Fa Lan brought the *sÈtra in Forty Two Sections* to China and they translated the *sÈtra* at the White Horse temple in *Loyang*.\(^9\) Romila Thapar\(^9\) asserts that the Central Asian oases like *Yarkand, Khotan, Kashgar, Tashkend, Turfan, Miran*

\(^7\) AIB, p. 277.
\(^8\) SST, p. 158.
\(^9\) DAI, p. 75.
\(^10\) NMB, p. 17.
\(^13\) RIP\(^1\), p. 605; RAI, pp. 137-8.
\(^14\) RPHEI, p. 255.
\(^15\) KBC, p. 20.
\(^17\) RPHEI, p. 255.
Kuccha, Qarashahr, and Tun huang became the important centres of Mahāyānaism during the time of Kaniska.

On the other hand, Kaniska not only favoured the Gandhara school of Buddhist art that had grown out of Greek influences, he also patronized Mathura school of art that set style of Indian art. During the time of Kaniska, the trade between India and Roma as well as the Mediterranean world developed. Kaniska minted coins in gold and copper. His coins showed gods of Brahmanism, images of Buddha and images of Greek gods.

Kaniska was succeeded by Huvishka (120-145 A.D.). D.N. Jha states that the successors of Kaniska ruled for one hundred years but the Kusāna power was on the decline under them. Seemingly the suzerainty of Kusāna did not uproot the Sakas from India altogether. So during the time of Vasudeva, the last king of Kusānas, the Sakasatraps became independent rulers of large part of central and western India, which were under their control. And about 155 A.D., Mathura became the head-quarter of the Saka Satraps, according to the Mathura inscriptions.

N. Dutt asserts that about the middle of the third century A.D., a king of the Sassanian dynasty of Persia defeated Vasudeva, the successor of Huvishka and reduced the Kusānas to the position of vassal.

Sātavāhanas and Mahāyāna Buddhism

According to D.N. Jha, in the north-western Deccan, on the ruins of the Maurya empire, arose the kingdom of the Sātavāhanas in the first century B.C. with its centre at Pratishtana (modern Paithan in Mahārastra). The Sātavāhanas (30 B.C. ² 270 A.D.) were known as Andhras as they were originated in the Andhra Pradesh whence they moved westward along the Godavari river, took advantage of the disintegration of Maurya empire, and established themselves in the west. But according to another view, they originally belonged to the western Deccan and gradually extended their territorial jurisdiction to the eastern coast which was

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84 HDHI3, p. 77.
85 Ibid.
86 NMB, pp. 27-8.
87 DAI, p. 71.
88 NMB, p. 27.
89 Ibid.
90 DAI, p. 71.
therefore called Andhra in the course of time. They ruled Andhra Pradesh including Deccan for nearly four hundred years with twenty-nine rulers of the dynasty. According to the earliest inscriptions of Sêtaêahanas found in the western Deccan, the later view may be correct. As mentioned in the records of Asoka, it is likely that Sêtaêahanas held important positions under the Mauryas. When Mauryas’ authority became weak, they occupied the throne of Mauryas and established their dynasty.

N. Dutt and D.N. Jha agree that Simuka was the first king of Sêtaêhana but Romila Thapar holds that Satakarni was the first ruler of the Sêtaêhana empire. The date of the Sêtaêhanas is debatable among historical works of India.

D.N. Jha asserts that Simuka destroyed the Shunga power and established Sêtaêhana dynasty about 235 B.C. and ruled for twenty-three years. But Sêtaêhanas were driven out of western Deccan afterwards by the Sakas of the Kshaharata clan. The coins and the inscriptions of Saka chief, Nahapana, found around Nasik, indicate that the Saka dominated the area towards the end of the first century A.D. or the beginning of the second century A.D.

Simuka’s successor, Kanha (212 B.C. ² 195 B.C.), extended the territory as far as Nasik. The next ruler Satakani I, probably was Kanha’s son. Though he ruled for only two years, he achieved a lot of merits; he is said to conquer western Malwa and was killed in the battle field. The successor of Satakarni I was Satakarni II, who ruled from 166 B.C. to 111 B.C. He extended the boundaries of his realm far to central India across the Vindhyas perhaps up to the Ganges river; and ruled Andhra for nearly fifty six years. The next important ruler of the dynasty was Gautamiputra Satakarni, who ruled from about 70 A.D. to 95 A.D., brought a large territory under his rule and he overthrew Nahapana, the Saka chief in the 18th year of his reign.

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91 Ibid.
92 NMB, p. 31.
93 DAI, p. 76.
94 RPHEI, p. 226.
95 DAI, p. 76.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 RPHEI, p. 226.
99 Ibid., p. 227.
100 Ibid.
101 DAI, p. 77.
Romila Thapar\textsuperscript{101} states that Gautamiputra had uprooted Sakas and had destroyed the pride of the Ksatriyas, promoted the interests of twice-born and stopped the mixing of the four castes.

\textit{Mahâyâna Buddhism}, it is said to have developed during the time of Gautamiputra.\textsuperscript{102} Pulumayi was successor of Gautamiputra Satakarni; he ruled from about 96 A.D. to 119 A.D. He took the empire to its zenith and extended the empire further to the south. He was succeeded by Sri Satakarni who seems to have ruled from 120 A.D. to 149 A.D. The next ruler, Siva Sri Pulumauyi ruled from about 150 A.D. to 156 A.D. His son, Siri Siva Khada Satakarni I, succeeded and ruled from 157 A.D. to 159 A.D. Sriyana came to the throne about 160 A.D. and ruled up to 189 A.D. At the end of his reign, Abhiras broke the unity of the \textit{Deccan} by taking the region around \textit{Nasik}.\textsuperscript{103} The next ruler Madhariputra Svami Sakasena succeeded Sriyana; he minted coins bearing lions and elephants motif on them. After his death, the \textit{Sêtavêhana} dynasty gradually declined.

Yajnasri Sêtakarni (174 A.D. \textsuperscript{2} 203 A.D.) was the last king of \textit{Sêtavêhanas}; he took advantage of the confusion at \textit{Ujjain} after the death of Rudradaman and invaded the dominion. He re-established \textit{Sêtavêhana} authority over the great part of western \textit{Deccan} and central India. He enlarged the famous \textit{Amaravati stêpa} and constructed the famous railing round the \textit{Mahachaitya}. Acharya Nêgarjuna lived in his court for some time. After his death in the third century A.D., the \textit{Sêtavêhana} authority declined and the local governors started claiming independent rights. As a result, five minor kingdoms came into being. In the north western \textit{Deccan}, the Abhiras came into prominence. In \textit{Maharastra} and \textit{Kuntala}, the Chutus became powerful. The Ikshvakus established themselves in \textit{Andhradesha}. In the south eastern part, the Pallavas founded an independent dynasty and grew into a great power by the middle of the sixth century A.D. The Vakataka became powerful in the region of \textit{Vidarbha (Bihar)}. And \textit{Sêtavêhana} dynasty disappeared from the political scene in the third century A.D.\textsuperscript{104}

It is said that \textit{Andhra Pradesh} was one of cradles of \textit{Mahâyâna Buddhism} during the period of \textit{Sêtavêhanas}. A large empire continuous peace during the period of \textit{Sêtavêhanas} guaranteed progress and consolidation of \textit{Buddhist} culture in the empire. Though most of

\textsuperscript{101} RPHEI, p. 227.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} NMB, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{104} DAI, p. 77.
SÈtavÈhana kings followed Brahmanism, they also patronized MahÈyÈnism. It is said that during the period of SÈtavÈhanas, the Buddhist order in Andhra rose to the summit of its glory. 105 Many stÈpas, monasteries were built around Maharashtra and Deccan. The most famous was the stÈpa at Amravati that was enlarged by king Pulumayi. 106 The Amravati school of art also developed in the period and was patronized by the SÈtavÈhana kings. 107 Many famous philosophers of MahÈyÈna like Avataka, Rahurabhadra, NÈgÈrjuna I, NÈgÈrjuna II (NÈgÈrbodhi), Ṭryadeva, etc. lived during the period of SÈtavahÈnas. 108

The Madhyamika school, founded by Rahurabhadra in the second century A.D., was developed during the time of SÈtavÈhanas by NÈgÈrjuna I, NÈgÈrjuna II, Ṭryadeva, etc. And Sanskrit came to occupy the place of prakrit as the language of inscription. 109

N. Dutt 110 affirms that, in the period, MahÈyÈnists started to worship Buddha and Bodhisattas as gods. Beside the practice of ethics and meditation of old system, the liberation by faith was emphasized and ten Perfections (pÈramitÈs) were considered as the means to the Buddhahood. There is no mention of Buddhist missionaries during the period of SÈtavÈhanas.

After the decline of SÈtavÈhanas, MahÈyÈna Buddhism continued to developed in the region and was patronized by the rulers who came after SÈtavÈhanas such as the Abhiras, Chutus, Ikshvakus, Pallavas and Vakatakas. Romila Thapar 111 asserts that though these kings performed Vedic sacrifices, the women of royal families supported Buddhist Sangha.

Guptas and MahÈyÈna Buddhism

Evidence on the origin and antecedents of the Gupta family is limited as it seemingly had emerged from obscure beginning. It is said that the Gupta family ruled a small principality in Magadha but recent research supports the western GangÈ plain as a base. Their status is said to be a Vaishya caste but some historical evidences record them as Brahmin by caste. The purÈnas

105 KTBH, p. 87.
106 NMB, p. 32.
107 Ibid.
108 KTB, p. 87.
109 DAI, p. 78.
110 NMB, p. 33.
111 RPHEI, p. 228.
report that the early Guptas controlled the area along the river Ganges from prayaga (Allahabad) to Magadha. But Pataliputra and central of Magadha were certainly not within their reach. According to R.C. Dutt\textsuperscript{112}, Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund\textsuperscript{113}, Candragupta I (320\textsuperscript{2} 335 A.D.) was the first ruler of Guptas, who married a Licchavi princess. Romila Thapar\textsuperscript{114} asserts that this marriage must have greatly contributed to the rise of the Gupta because the Licchavis was a mighty clan controlling most of north Bihar ever since the days of the Buddha. His rule extended over the Ganges heartland (Magadha, Saketa and Prayaga) and he took the title of Mah\text{"}raja adhiraja (great king of kings).\textsuperscript{115}

Romila Thapar states\textsuperscript{116} that Samudragupta (335\textsuperscript{2} 380 A.D.) was the second ruler of Guptas. He, was the most distinguished ruler of the dynasty. He came to the throne about 335 A.D. But N. Dutt\textsuperscript{117} asserts that Samudragupta got the throne about 320 A.D. and died 380 A.D. According to him, Samudragupta ruled over the territory extending in the east up to the whole of Bengal. In the north up to the foothill of Himalayas (except Karmir), and west Madrakas (in the Punjab). In the south from Bhilsa to Jubbalpore and thence along the Vindhya range of the hills. He conquered Aranyar\text{"}jyas (forest states). He defeated twelve rulers of the Deccan, viz, Mahendra of Dahsina Kosala (Drug, Raipur, Bilaspur and Sambulpur districts), Vy\text{"}ghraraija of Mah\text{"}kantara (Jeypopre state, Orissa), Hastivarman of Veng\text{"} (seven miles north of Ellora). In short, Samudragupta’s empire comprised the whole of northern India (except Kasmir), western Punjab, Sind, Gujarat, highlands of Chatitishgarh and Orissa as far south as Chingleput, probably even further.

Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund\textsuperscript{118} describe in detail the glorious feats in his policy of conquest and annexation. In the land of the Aryas, he uprooted many kings and princes between west Bengal in the east, Mathura in the west, and Vidisha in the south west. He annexed the realms, the old kingdom of Panchala in north of the Ganges. Many N\text{"}ega dynasties which had arisen in the areas from Mathura to Vidisha after the decline of

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{112} RAI, p. 126.
\bibitem{113} HDHI\textsubscript{3}, p. 81.
\bibitem{114} RPHEI, p. 282.
\bibitem{115} RAI, p. 126.
\bibitem{116} RPHEI, p. 283.
\bibitem{117} NMB, p. 34.
\bibitem{118} HDHI\textsubscript{3}, p. 82.
\end{thebibliography}
Kusênas, were eliminated. His conquest of *pataliputra* was also achieved in this first great campaign. N. Dutt\(^{119}\) states that in the south, he defeated twelve kings of *Deccan*; but Hermann Kulke\(^{120}\) affirms that those southern kings ruled their realms undisturbed after Samudragupta had returned to the north.

N. Dutt\(^{121}\) holds that Samudragupta could not rule over his great empire directly, he ruled it through his officials. The Pallavas of the south beyond the *Krishna* river were his feudatories. *Ceylon* and other islands in the south sea maintained friendly relations with him.\(^{122}\) After getting victory, he performed a great horse sacrifice and issued gold coins that showed the sacrificial horse on one side and his chief queen on the reverse side.\(^{123}\)

Candragupta II (375 A.D. ÷ 415 A.D.) was Samudragupta’s son.\(^{124}\) Under him, the Gupta empire attained its great glory both in terms of territorial expansion and cultural development. He is said to have combined the aggressive expansionist policy of his father and the strategy of marital alliance of his grandfather. N. Dutt\(^{125}\) asserts that his chief enemy was Saka ruler Rudrasimha III of *Gujarat* and *Kathiawad*. His foremost success was his victory over the mighty Saka-Ksattrapa dynasty and the annexation of their prosperous realm in *Gujarat* between 397 A.D. and 409 A.D. and thereby, he ended the Saka rule in India.\(^{126}\)

Candragupta II controlled most of northern India from the mouth of the *Ganges* to the mouth of the *Indus* and from north *Pakistan* down to the mouth of the *Narmada*. In alliance with Vakatakas, he also controlled a large part of central India. *Assam, Nepal, Kasmir*, and *Srîlanka* were his feudatories.\(^{127}\)

Under Candragupta II, the internal trade was developed as two eastern and western ports were now in his hand and these ports had greatly augmented trade not only in east and west but

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\(^{119}\) NMB, p. 35.

\(^{120}\) HDHI\(^3\), p. 82.

\(^{121}\) NMB, p. 35.

\(^{122}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{123}\) HDHI\(^3\), p. 82.

\(^{124}\) *Ibid.*, p. 84.

\(^{125}\) NMB, p. 35.

\(^{126}\) RPHEI, p. 285.

\(^{127}\) HDHI\(^3\), p. 85.
also in north and central India.\(^{128}\) Candragupta II’s reign is often remembered not only for wars but also for his patronage of art and culture as well as the development of trade.

Kumaragupta (415 \(^2\) 454) was, according to D.N. Jha\(^{129}\), successor of the Candragupta II. It was during the reign of Kumaragupta, a branch of white Hun from Central Asia had occupied Bactria. Though White Hun army was threatening north bounder for hundred years, whole the Kumaragupta’s empire remained peaceful. Finally, Skandagupta, the successor of Kumaragupta had to fight with Huns to defend the Gupta empire. But the situation became complicated owing to several domestic problems. According to D.N. Jha\(^{130}\), his feudatories seemingly asserted independence for themselves and his debased coins caused a deep economic crisis in his empire. But he consolidated his forces against the Huns and convincingly won the battle. The Gupta empire was extended, at his time, from the Bay of Bengal to Arabian Sea.\(^{131}\)

Skandagupta was succeeded by his nephew Buddhagupta (477 A.D. \(^2\) 496 A.D.).\(^{132}\) During the reign of Buddhagupta, the Hênas under Toramêna and his son Mihirakula made inroad into Gupta territory while the Maitrakas of Kathiawad peninsula, who were formerly feudatories of the Gupta rulers, asserted their independence and adopted the title of great kings. Their examples were followed by other such feudatories. Buddhagupta was succeeded by his brother Narasimhagupta (497 \(^2\) 570 A.D.), who took the title of Bêlêditya, triumphed over Mihirakula.\(^{133}\)

Narasimhagupta was persecutor of the Buddhism before and now became a great patron of Buddhism.\(^{134}\) After him, there was political disintegration and in the sixth century A.D., the Maitrakas asserted the independence and became great kings of Valabhi.\(^{135}\) King Narasimhagupta’s son was Kumêragupta II, who defeated the Maukhai king Isênavarman, ruled from 550 to 570 A.D. Kumêragupta II’s son Dêmodaragupta also defeated another Maukari king, but he died in the battle.

\(^{128}\) RPHEI, p. 285. \\
\(^{129}\) DAI, p. 98. \\
\(^{130}\) Ibid. \\
\(^{131}\) Ibid. \\
\(^{132}\) Ibid., p. 40. \\
\(^{133}\) Ibid. \\
\(^{134}\) Ibid., p. 40. \\
\(^{135}\) Ibid.
Dêmodaragupta’s son MahÊsenagupta is described in the Harsacarita as the ruler of the territory from Malwas to Bengal. MahÊsenagupta is said to have revived partially the glories of the Guptas but he had to suffer misfortunes. The Maitraka king DharmÊditya took possession of a considerable portion of Malwa; the Kalacurî king, Sankaragana, occupied Ujjayinî in 595 A.D. and ŠasÈnka asserted his independence in Bengal. After such discomfitsures, KumÈragupta III and his son Madhavagupta had to take shelter in the court of PrabhÊkaravardhana of Thaneswar, whose mother MahÊsengupta Devi was a sister of MahÊsenagupta.

According to N. Dutt, after the dissolution of the Gupta empire, at the end of the sixth century A.D., a number of states not only asserted their independence but also tried to gain control over other countries. For example, the ŠasÈnka of Bengal, who was a feudatory chief (MahÊsÈmanta) of MahÊsenagupta, freed himself from the yoke of MahÊsenagupta, and extended his dominion from Bengal to Mahendragiri mountain in the Ganjam district in the Andhra province. He killed king RÊjyavardhana by alluring him with false promises.

Thus, the Gupta reign came to an end by the sixth century A.D. The great empire of Gupta was divided into the small kingdoms of feudatories.

L.M. Joshi states that though all Gupta kings followed Brahmanism, they patronized Buddhism too, so Buddhism had a quantitative and qualitative advancement and specially MahÊyÊanism was prosperous during the time of Guptas. The philosophy, ethics and art, etc of MahÊyÊa Buddhism influenced the PurÊnic Brahmanism (Hinduism) in the period. The image worship, the doctrine of devotion (bhakti) and reciting DhÊrÊnis evolved as characteristic features of MahÊyÊa Buddhism during the time of Guptas. And the Buddha seems to have been accepted as an incarnation of Vi–ţu by the PurÊnas. Apart from that, the Buddha, Bodhisattva Manjusri, Avalokitesvara and goddess prajÊparamita were the objects of worship. The cult of Amitabha Buddha and his SukhÊvati (happiness of pureland) have seemingly

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136 Ibid., p. 42.
137 Ibid., p. 43.
139 DAI, p. 88.
140 JBC, p. 8.
attracted the masses. Even such eminent philosopher Vasubandhu II was also attracted by the happiness of paradise.\textsuperscript{141}

It is said that the vegetarianism of the followers of Hinduism seemingly started from the time of Guptas and was influenced by the \textit{Lankavatara s\`utra} of Mah\`y\`anism.\textsuperscript{142}

There were two Vasubandhus lived during the time of Guptas. The former was Vasubandhu I (Asanga’s younger brother, author of \textit{Abhidharmakosa}), who was converted to Mah\`y\`anism by Asanga, lived at \textit{Purusapura} (Kaniska’s capital) in \textit{Gandhara} in the period from 320 A.D. to 400 A.D. Vasubandhu I was patronized by Samudragupta.\textsuperscript{143} The latter was Vasubandhu II, who was D\`innaga master, lived in \textit{Ayodhy\`E} during the period from 455 A.D. to 467 A.D.\textsuperscript{144} This Vasubandhu was patronized by Skandagupta (456 A.D. \textsuperscript{2} 467 A.D.).\textsuperscript{145} Apart from that, there were many famous philosophers of Mah\`y\`an lived in the Gupta period. Some of them were Maitreyan\`ertha (the founder of the \textit{Yog\`ec\`Era} school), Asanga (Maitreyan\`ertha’s disciple), Bh\`Evaviveka and Buddhap\`Elita (both were philosophers of \textit{Madhyamika} school).\textsuperscript{146}

According to L.M. Joshi, \textit{Madhyamika} school, which was founded by Rahurabhara (N\`eg\`Erjuna’s master) in the first century A.D., was further developed by Aryadeva (N\`eg\`Erjuna’s disciple). Towards the middle of the sixth century A.D., the school was split into \textit{Svatantrika} and \textit{Pr\`Esangika} sects; the former was headed by Bh\`Evaviveka and the latter by Buddhap\`Elita.\textsuperscript{147}

The \textit{Yog\`ec\`Era} school, which was founded by Maitreyan\`ertha in the third century A.D., reached its climax during the age of Samudragupta.\textsuperscript{148} Asanga (4\textsuperscript{th} A.D.), Vasubandhu I (4\textsuperscript{th} A.D.), Vasubandhu II (5\textsuperscript{th} A.D.), Sthiramti (5\textsuperscript{th} A.D.), Dharmap\`El (6\textsuperscript{th} A.D.), etc were the exponents of \textit{Yog\`ec\`Era} school during the period of Guptas.\textsuperscript{149}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 340.
\item DAI, p. 97.
\item AIB, p. 424.
\item NMB, p. 39.
\item JBC, p. 7.
\item \textit{Ibid.}
\item NMB, p. 34.
\item JBC, p. 7.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Two most special features of the sixth century A.D. were recorded by L.M. Joshi: (1) the emergence of the Buddhist version of science of logic and beginning of intense controversy between the Buddhist and the Brahmanical schools, and (2) the definite emergence of Esoteric Buddhism or Vajrayâna. Towards the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century A.D., there lived Dinnâga, the father of Indian logic, founded a new school of ‘critical philosophy’ in Mahâyâna Buddhism. He is said to augurated an age of philosophical controversies and intellectual tournaments and he is known to have criticized Naiyâyika logic theories.150 Owing to his critical philosophy, the Mahâyânic thinkers began to take an active part in philosophical debates and a keen interest in logic theories. The tradition of Dinnâga was continued by his disciples, Samkarasvâmi and Isvarasena.151

Buddhist art was blooming profusely in the time of Guptas. Two main schools of art, which were influenced by Mahâyâna, Mathura and Gandhara, were patronized by the Gupta rulers. K. Antonova152 asserts that the University of Nâlandâ, which in course of time became the greatest centre of Buddhist learning in Asia, was built by Kumâragupta Mahendrâditya. Beside the University of Nâlandâ, the monasteries at Mathurâ and Pâtaliputra were active centres of monastic were built during the time of the Guptas.

The wonderful rock-cut caitya halls with the remarkable sculptures and frescoes at Ajanta are largely the creation of the Gupta period. The art centres of the period were Sâranâtha, Mathurâ and Nâlandâ that have yielded large number of images of Buddha, Bodhisattvas and other deities. Buddhist arts and paintings reached their climax during the time of Guptas.

During the period, many Mahâyâna missionaries were sent to the countries of Central Asia and China. A number of the Sanskrit sūtras, Sūtras, Vinaya texts, Dharanîs texts, and commentaries of Mahâyânic texts were brought to China by Indian monks and were translated into Chinese. The missionary and literary activities of Buddhhabhadra, Dharmaksema, Kumârajâva, Paramârtha, etc greatly contributed towards the growth and diffusion of Buddhist literature outside India.153

150 Ibid., p. 10.
151 Ibid.
152 KHI, p. 172.
153 JBC, p. 9.
According to R.C. Dutt\textsuperscript{154}, during the reign of Candragupta II, Fa Hien (Chinese monk) came to India and stayed therefore fourteen years. His main object was to find out the original \textit{Vinaya} texts, as he believed that Chinese monks were not strictly observant of the disciplinary rules prescribed in the \textit{Vinaya Pitaka}. He is said to have travelled across the country and collected many important informations concerning politics, literature, and art.

Kum\v{e}raj\i va (344-413 A.D.)\textsuperscript{155} (son of a Kuchean mother, princess j\i va and Indian father Kum\v{e}rajjana from Kuc\i , Central Asia) came to Kashmir to study the \textit{Buddhist Sanskrit} literature and philosophy with his master Bandhudatta. Thereafter he returned to Kuc\i wherefrom he came to China in 401 A.D. He translated many \textit{s\`tras} into Chinese, not only \textit{Mah\`y\`ena} texts but also \textit{S\`r\v{v}astiv\`eda} texts. Among his translations, the version of the \textit{Saddharmap\u{u}\c{Z}ar\l ka s\`tra} is popular in the countries practising \textit{Mah\`y\`Enism}.

After the Gupta age, \textit{Buddhism} in India gradually declined and it almost disappeared from its motherland mainly due to the devastation of Muslims. The \textit{Mah\`y\`Enism} was also not an exception.

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\textsuperscript{154} RAI, pp. 127-8.
\textsuperscript{155} ACB, p. 163; NMB, p. 27.